

LOS ANGELES COUNTY POOR FARM, DAIRYMAN'S HOUSE
(Rancho Los Amigos, Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Building No.
1137)
(Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center)
(Rancho Los Amigos Medical Center)
7601 Imperial Highway
Downey
Los Angeles County
California

HABS CA-2800-AC
HABS CA-2800-AC

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
DAIRYMAN'S HOUSE
(Rancho Los Amigos, Los Angeles County Building No. 1137)
Rancho Los Amigos Medical Center

HABS No. CA-2800-AC

Location: 7601 Imperial Highway, located on the block bounded by Erickson Avenue to the west, Bonita Street to the south and east, and Consuelo Street to the north and east.

U.S. Geological Survey Los Angeles Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 3754043 N; 392562.4 E

Present Owner / Occupant: County of Los Angeles

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: The Dairyman's House is significant under National Register of Historic Places Criterion A for its association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history. Located on what is now known as the Rancho Los Amigos South Campus, the historic district portrays the establishment of the County Poor Farm at this location in 1887, its transition into a facility for long-term indigent medical care between the two world wars, and its emergence as a medical and rehabilitation center in the early post World War II years. The building was erected in 1907 to serve as a staff residence of the County Poor Farm. The building was originally occupied from 1907-1911 by Fred Wyman, a gardener. In 1911, L.R. Manning, head dairyman and brother of then Superintendent, Charles C. Manning, took occupancy of the building and remained there until 1915. From 1919 to 1945 Billy Payne, a nursing aide, lived in the house. From 1949 until 1970 it was occupied by Azalea Barton, of whom little is known. In 1970, the building was given to the landscaping department for storage. The building is currently abandoned, and is one of three staff residences (in addition to the Harriman House) still extant.¹

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

- 1. Date of erection:** 1907
- 2. Architect:** No known architect could be associated with the Dairyman's House.
- 3. Original and subsequent owners:** County of Los Angeles (1887/1888–present)

¹ The other two are Staff Cottages LACO Nos. 1121 and 1123 (HABS No. CA-2800-E and F), located in the northwest section of the South Campus.

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4. **Original and subsequent occupants:** County of Los Angeles (1887/1888–present)
5. **Builder, contractor, suppliers:** No known builder, contractor, or supplier could be associated with the Dairyman's House.
6. **Original plans and construction:** No building permits, original plans, or construction drawings were found for the Dairyman's House.
7. **Alterations and additions:** The Dairyman's House has had a few alterations at unknown times. The porch on the west (façade) elevation was enclosed with double hung wood windows. The kitchen was enlarged by an addition on the east elevation.

B. Historic Context:

Begun in 1887/1888 as the new County Poor Farm, Rancho Los Amigos upon its inception was a rehabilitation facility that provided work, housing, and medical care to the indigent. The original purchase of 124.4 acres in the vicinity of the town of Downey, founded in 1873, was graded for roads, supplied with water from an artesian well, and improved with a Refectory Building (Dining Hall), the North and South Wards, an aviary, and an Office Building by 1889. During the following decade, barns and ancillary buildings with agricultural functions, a freight and passenger railroad depot, a combined bathhouse and laundry facility, and an additional ward were added.

By the 1890s, the County Poor Farm's livestock and agricultural operations were self-sufficient. The County Poor Farm had a herd of nearly 100 Jersey and Holstein cows, which provided a daily output of 200 gallons of milk. For eggs, the farm relied upon its productive, 800-chicken poultry farm located east of Erickson Avenue and north of Gardendale Street. East of the poultry yard was a hog farm, which supported approximately 150 Berkshire and Poland hogs. Sheep were raised and used for their wool. Percheron draft horses were kept to assist with heavy labor tasks. A wide range of crops were grown at the County Poor Farm, including fruits such as strawberries, peaches, and pears, and vegetables such as cabbage, corn, celery, onions, radishes, sugar beets, peas, cucumbers, and olives. With the assistance of farm supervisors, able-bodied patients helped work the fields and orchards, for which they received compensation of \$1.50 per day. Irrigation was provided primarily by the farm's artesian well. Water from the well was pumped using a 10-horse power engine and stored in a water tower.²

The County Poor Farm began to make a profit from agriculture in 1909, with oranges its notable and profitable crop. In April 1909, the Semi-Tropical Fruit Exchange paid over \$10,000 for 33 cars of navel oranges which constituted about one half of the County Poor Farm's total yield. In May 1909, another \$5,000 worth of oranges were sold. The crop was considered so valuable that a high fence was constructed to protect the County Poor Farm's orange grove from thieves, which was

² Fliedner, Colleen Adair. 1990. *Centennial, Rancho Los Amigos Medical Center, 1888–1988*. Downey, CA: Rancho Los Amigos Medical Center.

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calculated to have saved the County from approximately two train car loads worth of stolen oranges that year.

The County Poor Farm's agricultural operations not only met daily needs but also provided surpluses of milk and fresh produce to the Los Angeles County Hospital in downtown Los Angeles. Sales between the Los Angeles County Hospital and the County Poor Farm saved Los Angeles County thousands of dollars each year. By 1911, it was reported that the County Poor Farm was supplying the Los Angeles County Hospital with over \$13,000 worth of produce and milk annually.³ This mutually beneficial arrangement between the County Poor Farm and Los Angeles County Hospital continued for many years until farming operations at the County Poor Farm ceased in the 1950s.

The County Poor Farm grew into a nationally recognized institution in the fields of cultivation and scientific breeding as a producer of prized crops and livestock. In addition to operating a successful agricultural enterprise, the County Poor Farm gradually expanded its role as a County medical facility. An increasing number of inmates with chronic medical disorders were being admitted to the County Poor Farm during the 1910s, prompting administrators to employ a staff of physicians and nurses to treat them. This surge in patients, and subsequently employees, would create the impetus for expanded development at the County Poor Farm in ensuing decades. The influx of new patients at the County Poor Farm provided the impetus for the expansion of services and facilities needed, resulting in the construction of a number of buildings at the property. The County Poor Farm's expansion reflected an important shift as the focus of the facility transitioned from rehabilitative care for indigents into a hospital to house long-term invalid patients.

PART II. ARCHITECTURE INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. **Architectural character:** The Dairyman's House was constructed in a Craftsman-influenced style. It is a one-story building, asymmetrical in appearance and rectangular in plan. The wood framed building is capped by a medium-pitched side-gabled roof, sheathed in split wood shingles. Rectangular louvered vents are visible in the eaves on the north and south elevations. A brick chimney is attached to the south side of the east elevation. The wood vernacular style of the building is characterized by the horizontal massing and rectangular plan; (now partially enclosed) porch with squared wood posts; medium-pitched side-gabled roof; linear bands of windows; and a screened porch.
2. **Condition of fabric:** The current condition of Dairyman's House is poor. Left vacant for many years, the building, including exposed building materials, windows, doors, and the interior, has deteriorated from neglect, vandalism, and exposure resulting in the current state of disrepair and disintegration.

³ *Los Angeles Times*. 3 May 1909 "Fence Saves County Cash," p. 15.

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B. Description of Exterior:

1. **Overall dimensions:** The Dairyman's House net interior condition space (interior dimensions exclusive of covered or enclosed exterior spaces) calculates to 1,138 square feet. The building has a gross area of exterior square footage of 1,256 square feet and a footprint of 1,256 square feet.⁴
2. **Foundations:** The Dairyman's House sits on a raised concrete slab foundation.
3. **Walls:** The exterior walls of the Dairyman's House are covered with horizontal wood cladding.
4. **Structural system, framing:** The structural system includes a side-gabled roof supported by wood-framed walls.
5. **Openings:**
 - a. **Windows.** The fenestration of the Dairyman's House can generally be characterized as wood-framed windows including (where extant) two-over-two double-hung sash windows and single fixed windows. The windows are surrounded by simple wood casings and have slightly projecting sills.
 - b. **Doors.** The main entrance is located on the west elevation and consists of a Craftsman style wood door. Although deteriorated and boarded up, there was possibly a second entrance on the east elevation.
6. **Roof:**

The Dairyman's House is capped by medium-pitched side-gabled roof sheathed in split-wood shingles. Slightly overhanging boxed eaves are visible on the north, west, and south elevations, whereas exposed rafters are visible on the east elevation. Rectangular louver vents are located beneath the gables.

- C. Description of Interior:** The Dairyman's House is divided into several rooms which include a foyer, living room, dining room, kitchen, laundry room, bathroom, and bedroom. Two wood columns flank the entrance between the foyer and living room, distinguishing the transition between these two areas. A fireplace is located in the living room at the building's southeast corner. Opposite the fireplace, to the north is a built-in dresser. Interior flooring includes wood, carpet, and vinyl.

⁴ Sapphos Environmental, Inc. 15 December 2008. Revised Memorandum for the Record, 1217-056, No. 21, Update to the List of Buildings, Structures, and Features of the Rancho Los Amigos Historic District. Pasadena, CA.

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D. Site:

1. **General setting:** Existing landscaping surrounding the Dairyman's House consists of mature grass, trees and shrubs. A concrete walkway leads to the primary entrance of the building from Bonita Street.
2. **Orientation:** The building is located north of Bonita Street and east of Erickson Avenue. The Administration Building / Safety Police Building is located to the east, and the building is located on the block bounded by Erickson Avenue to the west, Bonita Street to the south which curves to the east, and Consuelo Street to the north which curves to the east. The building is situated adjacent to the street frontage of Bonita Street and faces west.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings:

No original drawings for the Dairyman's House were discovered. A set of as-found drawings were prepared for the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) documentation in 2007 by Mollenhauer Group for the County of Los Angeles.

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C. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

Rancho Los Amigos Foundation collection

D. Supplemental Material:

Reduced copies of 2007 as-found architectural drawings

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

HABS documentation for the Dairyman's House was prepared by Sapphos Environmental, Inc. staff from December 2006 to June 2010 on behalf of the County of Los Angeles Chief Executive Office (CEO). The HABS documentation serves as mitigation to comply with the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed Campus Plan project. Measured surveys were carried out in 2007 by Mollenhauer Group, Los Angeles, California. Photographs were taken from January 2010 to June 2010 by Mr. David Lee, production manager, Sapphos Environmental, Inc. Part I of the historical report (historic context) was prepared by Ms. Shannon Carmack, senior cultural resources coordinator, Ms. Rebecca Silva, senior cultural resources coordinator, Ms. Deborah Howell-Ardila, senior cultural resources coordinator, Ms. Marlise Fratinardo, senior cultural resources coordinator, and Ms. Laura Carias, cultural resources coordinator, Sapphos Environmental, Inc. Part II of the historical report (architectural information) was prepared by Ms. Rebecca Silva, senior cultural resources coordinator, Ms. Marlise Fratinardo, senior cultural resources coordinator, and Ms. Laura Carias, cultural resources coordinator, Sapphos Environmental,

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Inc. Ms. Leslie Heumann, Sapphos Environmental, Inc. manager of cultural resources, reviewed the final report and supporting documents, and provided research, writing, and project oversight.